

June 2018 Public Tour: **A Powerful Presence**

Discover the power of role models in history and myth and explore who (or what) has influenced you.

The human search for a role model is not limited to a particular time of life, geographic place, or time in history. Becoming our best selves can be inspired by a person or place that is “A Powerful Presence” to us. These notes are only suggestions and approaches. Your tour, as always, is your own!

Cycle of Life

- **Parents and family** are often the first role models. Choose from many Mia favorites, and also consider less frequently used works about families: **At the Spring** by Nicholas Richard Brewer (2009.17), **Uma-Maheshvara/Shiva’s Family** (97.36), and **Portrait Group of the Drummond Family** by Benjamin West (31.60). Many Confucian objects honor the powerful presence of the family in this life and beyond: What does the **Wu Family Reception Hall** teach about one’s proper place in the social structure?
- **Inspiration.** A powerful presence can be someone who enters one’s life at “the right time and place.” Consider Berthe Morisot’s **Artist’s Daughter, Julie, with her Nanny** (96.40) or an object that relates to teachers or coaches. A literati spending time in the **Scholar’s Study** could inspire those looking forward to retirement.
- **Growing older.** In the Kunin Collection, **Marisol’s** work shows the bound hands and flat-footed sculpture of modern dance innovator/choreographer **Martha Graham** (G360). Encourage visitors to discuss role models as one ages or lives with limitations. Wikipedia’s biography of Graham’s long roller-coaster life explains much about Marisol’s work.

Those who do more...or attract attention

- **Very Good People.** Religious art often includes stories of exceptionally kind, generous people making good choices despite adversity. Share the story of St. Francis in **Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints** by Daddi (34.20). Encourage visitors to talk about someone in today’s world that they admire. How has their life been touched/influenced?
- **Noble Cause.** Look at Sully’s **George Washington** (32.12) or Barye’s **Theseus Slaying the Centaur** (55.11A,B). What childhood heroes/heroines do visitors remember? What did they admire about that person?
- **Hard Work and Accomplishment.** James J. Hill was a powerful presence in Minnesota. (Wikipedia has a good article.) Share his story while showing the **Presentation Tray** (81.5). What was his attitude towards life? What can we learn today from his story?
- **Star Power: In Sports.** The perfect athletic body and an amazing sports performance can be a powerful presence whether one is young or old. Pick a muscled **Torso** (70.39, 57.40) or the **Doryphorus** to explore our relationships with athletics. What does physical discipline say about intelligence or morality? How important are those qualities in an athlete? We’ve seen

sports heroes “fall off the pedestal”—do you still admire their great accomplishments? How did you decide?

- **Star Power: In the Media.** Bad behavior by the famous is nothing new. Girodet’s **Mlle. Lange as Danae** (69.22) is an example. Why do people imitate the notorious or the “famous for being famous”? How have accomplishment and fame become separated?

Mentors and Networking

Artists frequently train with more experienced artists — pick your favorite. Henry Bannarn sculpted **Cleota Collins** (2011.64), an opera singer and civil rights activist. Bannarn was admired as a teacher. In his home he was a mentor to artists during the Harlem Renaissance. What do mentors and networking provide for young people?

Where We Came From

With today’s genealogy websites, ancestry has become a passion for many people. Imagining the strength of character of one’s ancestors has become a powerful presence today. Mia is rich with objects brought by immigrants. Consider an object from the Folk Art gallery. The Norwegian immigrant **Chest** (99.93A,B) gives a different definition to “downsizing.” Renée Stout’s poignant **Crossroads Marker with Little Hand, Reaching** (2016.2) reminds us that not all immigrants chose their path. When **Ernie Whiteman** (Untitled, 92.140) described the rock writing on his reservation, he spoke about the “presence and the power” of ancestors that influenced his work. Choose one of the **Hanukkah lamps** (G362) as a reminder of the resilient ancestors that inspire the Jewish people today.

Changing Roles

Today it is common for both men and women to work and this has meant re-considering traditional roles. Who cooks? cleans? manages the kids? Choose your favorite “foodie” painting to explore questions about the changing roles at home. Cooking shows are increasingly popular on TV. How does seeing men as chefs affect role models? Use Picasso’s **Baboon and Young** (55.45) to discuss the role of childcare. Ask visitors to recall parenting roles when they were young. How have things changed? Briefly explain the history of Millais’s **Peace Concluded** (69.48). If a wounded warrior returned to an average Minnesota home today, how might the woman’s and man’s roles change? Listen to the audio clip of **The Lady at Her Toilet** (71.1), a satire on vanity and housework. Explore “what’s wrong here” and then consider housework. Does a clean house reflect virtue? Visitors can share how they get their housework done. Is it still a high priority?

Authenticity

For many visitors, becoming one’s true self is a personal journey...one that evolves over a lifetime. Art can be a powerful presence in a world that seeks to define and limit who individuals are. Gallery 373 addresses “Identity: Who Are We Now?” George Segal’s **The Girl Friends** (2014.42) presents caring and intimacy in a gay relationship. When it was made in 1969 most gay relationships were “in the closet.” Let visitors consider its position in the center of the gallery...what does that say? Why have things changed? What has been the influence of gay

role models as celebrities, in TV shows and the arts? What if a role model does not reflect who you really are? The weaving **Out in Front** (L2017.141.1) by Emma Amos addresses that issue.

Nature

Does the power of nature inspire you? Find your favorite Chinese landscape painting in the **Enchanted Mountains** exhibition (G203, G218). **Cypress at Jade Mountain** by Luo Jianwu (2010.20) makes a strong statement. Paintings by Wang Chen (G218) draw on his heritage as a descendant of Wang Shih-min, a great literatus painter and calligrapher. Wang Chen's paintings reflect the natural beauty of the region where he lived and worked. Here in Minnesota, George Morrison explored the power of the horizon line in his life, drawings and small paintings (G353).